

This report should show that the riot was not an isolated, spontaneous, incident but was the result of a series of events that were directed and planned by upper class white businessmen in order to regain control of government and that Wilmington should not be viewed as existing in a vacuum—it was part of a larger campaign to take over state government in 1898—Democratic Party strategists thrust the city into the spotlight as an example of Republican corruption and bad government because of the participation of African Americans in local politics. The report will not answer the question of how many people died as a result of the violence. Extant records and physical evidence cannot completely answer the question. The report will challenge the claims of wholesale property seizure—no evidence was found to prove that whites seized black property or forced blacks to sell at deflated prices right after the riot—unethical behavior by some whites in the years after the riot did not translate into city-wide property transitions. Furthermore, the report has demonstrated that the violence and campaign impacted all aspects of African American life—churches, cultural celebrations such as Emancipation Day and Jonkonnu, business development, and schools.

This long term project has had the assistance of many helpful and supportive people over the years. Proper acknowledgement of all who contributed to the project will be difficult but I will make a humble attempt. Thanks to members of the Commission who volunteered their time to assist with research and read drafts of the report—Lottie Clinton, Kenneth Davis, Harper Peterson, Helyn Lofton, Ruth Haas, Alfred Thomas, Irv Joyner and John Haley—for they led the way. Special thanks should go to Beverly Tetterton of the New Hanover County Public Library for her depth of knowledge about Wilmington history and willingness to answer my incessant questions—without Beverly's help in locating resources, particularly those of the late Bill Reaves, the work would be less complete. The staff of the Research Branch, the Office of Archives and History, and the State Library deserve compliment for their understanding and helpfulness in facilitating this report—Michael Hill, Vivian McDuffie, Ansley Wegner, Mark Moore, Dennis Daniels, Lisa Keenum, Dr. Jeffrey Crow, Dr. David Brook, Matt Burton, Denise Craig, Jo Ann Williford, Fay Henderson, Earl Ijames, Sion H. Harrington III, Chris Meekins, Cheryl McLean, Steve Case, Katherine Beery, Chris Graham, Hilary Kanupp, Mary Ajiboye, Ron Vestal, Kay Tillotson, Joy Heitman, Tom Vincent, Pam Toms, Debbie Blake, Claudia Brown, Chandra Burch, Cynthia Jones, Dick Lankford, Steve Claggett, Judy Easley, Gwen Mays, Steve Massengill, Lisa Coombes, Bonnie Spiers, Joyce Throckmorton, Alan Westmoreland, among others.

Outside of state government, special thanks for assistance, brainstorming, technical support and editing skills, among a host of other helpful work should go to Janet Davidson, Tim Bottoms, Catherine Bishir, Janet Seapker, Ed Turberg, David Cecelski, Robert Adams, Sandy Darity, Tod Hamilton, Alan Watson, Kent Chatfield, Rudolph Knight, Larry Alford, Walker Taylor, III, Hugh MacCrae, Haywood Newkirk, Anne Russell, Gwendolyn Cottman, Mary Alice Jervay Thatch, Harry Watson, Mark Bradley, Elizabeth Hines, Heather Williams, Bernard Thuersam, Donna Pope, Jim Wrenn, Steve McAllister, Chris Fonvielle, Melton McLaurin, John Hope Franklin, Rev. John D. Burton, Rev. Artie L. Odom, Jr. and Rev. Hudson Barksdale, Rev. Joseph Brown, Adolph H. Lewis, Janet Metzger, Sarah Nerney, Bob Wooley, Beverly Ayscue, Sue Cody, North Carolina Collection staff, Nicholas Graham, Bob Anthony, Inez Campbell, Grace Byrd, Katherine Ennett, Chrystabelle Brown, Theresa Moore Walker, Cynthia J. Brown, Bertha Todd, Eli Naeher, and interns Erica Hink and James Vincent Lowery.